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FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
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INFO RUEHXK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 001319

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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE, NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/MUSTAFA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/30/2016
TAGS: PREL PGOV PHUM KWBG KPAL IS
SUBJECT: EVICTION FINALLY COMES FOR EAST JERUSALEM FAMILY

REF: A. 1998 JERUSALEM 002981

1B. 1998 JERUSALEM 003423
1C. 1999 JERUSALEM 001726
1D. 2003 JERUSALEM 000891
1E. 2004 JERUSALEM 000086
1F. 2004 TEL AVIV 00174

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

This cable has been cleared by Embassy Tel Aviv.

11. (C) Summary. An East Jerusalem Palestinian family, engaged in a protracted legal battle with the Government of Israel (GOI) to maintain ownership of their home in Silwan, was summarily evicted March 29. According to an attorney involved in the case, privately hired Israeli security guards, working in conjunction with Israeli Border Police, carried out the removal of the Guzlan family less than one hour after receiving a notice of eviction. Israeli human rights activists have criticized the handling of the eviction, but an official from the Jerusalem mayor's office asserted that the eviction was carried out in accordance with Israeli court orders. The Guzlan property case, which has received considerable USG attention and intervention since the 1990s (REFS A-F), was notable in part due to the Guzlan grandfather's role in protecting the Jewish residents of Silwan during the 1929 Arab riots. End summary.

Guzlan Family Evicted
From Silwan Home

12. (C) Jerusalem attorney Danny Seidemann notified Poloff March 29 that Ahmad Guzlan -- a client of Seidemann's since the early 1990s -- was being evicted from his family home in East Jerusalem's Silwan neighborhood. Daniela Yanai, staff attorney for Ir Amin, an Israeli NGO involved in the Guzlan case, told Poloff that the family was presented an eviction letter by two Israeli Border Police at their entrance to their home at approximately 0830 Local March 29. Yanai said that the eviction letter informed the family that it would be removed from the premises that day. Less than one hour later, approximately 20 to 30 private Israeli security guards arrived to remove the Guzlan's home furnishings into waiting moving vans. (Note: Yanai did not know if the security guards were employed by the GOI or other private interests. End note.) Arik Ascherman from the Israeli NGO Rabbis For Human Rights reported that the eviction was completed later that afternoon.

13. (C) Both Yanai and Ascherman suspected that El-Ad, an Israeli settler organization, may have played a role in the Guzlan's eviction. Yanai said that the Guzlan house, located on the Silwan hillside near the ruins of the biblical City of

David, has significant interest for El-Ad, which has spearheaded efforts to purchase and occupy houses in the area. Yanai indicated that between four to five houses in the immediate vicinity to the Guzlan home are already occupied by Jewish families affiliated with El-Ad. Yanai did not know who gave the order to evict the family on March 29, but Jerusalem municipal official Mordechai Levy told ConGen Poloff that the eviction was carried out in accordance with previous Israeli court decisions.

Eviction Marks End to
Protracted Legal Struggle

¶4. (C) The Guzlan family has been locked in a legal battle with the Jewish National Fund (JNF) since the early 1980s over ownership of the land. A Guzlan family member sold the land to the JNF in 1923. The Guzlan family subsequently built a home on the land in 1966. While an Israeli court ruled in favor of the JNF in 1987, the organization had refrained from evicting the family because of pressure from the GOI and anticipated negative publicity of evicting the Guzlan family, whose grandfather received a letter of commendation from the Jewish communities of Silwan and Jerusalem in 1929 for his role in sheltering Jews during the riots of that year. The JNF, which had spent 16 years trying to evict the Guzlan family from their residence, sold the property in 2003 to the Israel Lands Authority (ILA). The ILA had subsequently obtained a series of eviction notices which were never enforced.

Timing of Eviction Questioned

¶5. (C) Both Yanai and Ascherman speculated that the timing of the March 29 eviction -- one day after the Israeli Knesset elections -- was meant to avoid public scrutiny. They also noted that Israelis on March 29 occupied several apartments in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of A-Tor (Mount of Olives).

WALLES